

10 STEPS TO PRODUCING BETTER MATERIALS

If you are a composer who prepares your own parts, it's pretty likely you are using computer software to typeset your music. The two most commonly used programs are Sibelius and Finale. I would like to offer some tips on how to prepare materials that are elegant and readable for your performers, so you won't receive the dreaded call from the orchestra librarian "there are some serious problems with your parts."

1. Proofread Your Score

It may seem self evident, but I seldom receive a score from a composer that has been professionally proofread. Don't trust the playback features of your software; they are helpful tools, but they can't substitute for careful visual examination of the music.

Be sure to print out the final score and carefully go through it. Proofreading onscreen is like scuba diving for treasure without a light; it's pretty hit or miss what you will find. Pay particular attention to the extremes of the page and/or system (the end of one system, the start of the next). Be organized, and don't try to read the music and imagine it in your head. Instead, try to look at the musical details and check everything for accuracy. Check items for continuity. If it says pizz., did you remember to put in arco? If the trumpet is playing with a harmon mute on page 10 and you never say senza sord., it will be that way for the rest of your piece, or the player will raise their hand in rehearsal and waste valuable time asking "do I ever remove this mute"?

2. Make a Copy of the Score and add Cues

Wait a minute, you say. My program has this nifty "dynamic" (linked) parts feature. It's all automatic. You push a button and just like a bread machine, the parts pop out. That might work for commercial music where the music is simple and speed outweighs care and planning of the parts. But your score might have 2 instruments sharing a staff, or divisi string parts on a single staff that need to be written out in the parts. You might have put in labels and reminders in the score that need to be in different places in the parts. There are lots of things that should be different in a part, that are difficult to do with "dynamic" parts.

I recommend making a copy of your score file and adding all the cues, preparing it for part extraction. This can be the master file you use for your work, preserving the original corrected file you created after step 1 for printing for the conductor.

Finale and Sibelius have plugins that will search for appropriate spots to insert cues. Generally, if a player rests for more than 8 bars, they need some kind of cue before they come in again. If they rest a long time (say 50 bars or more) they will need "landmark" cues along the way (think road trip, cross country) so they don't get lost.

Cues must be obvious and clear. The 3rd Trumpet player might not be able to hear the violas playing beats 2 and 3 of the waltz movement when they change from F-G to G-A, or something subtle like that. But they will hear when the entire string section enters after sitting out for 40 bars. Cues are sledge hammers, not tweezers.

3. Extract One Part

Extracting parts is a technical process, and things can (and do) go wrong. I recommend extracting one part (preferably in the middle of your ensemble, rather than at the top of the score).

4. Proofread the Sample Part

Print that part out and check all the global elements to make sure they appear, and are in the right place. Things drift; sometimes they are "attached" to the wrong spot, and sometimes (in Finale, primarily) people don't code them so they will extract properly. Your job at this stage is to find all the problems and fix them *before* you extract the parts. It will save a lot of time and grief later.

5. Correct the Cued Score

If you find any mistakes, go back to your cued score and figure out what went wrong and fix it. Extract another part and make sure it works correctly. You want to be sure the process is going to work smoothly.

6. Extract the Parts

This is where you do get to just push a button. But pay attention to the filenames you use for your parts. Both Sibelius and Finale allow you to number the parts so they display correctly in dialogue boxes, etc. It's helpful to have the title in the filename too, and of course the instrument name as well.

7. Go Through Each Part for Layout

The first thing you want to do is decide where the page turns will be. Your software will have an option to do it automatically, but it doesn't do the task as well as you can by actually looking at the music. A 2-bar rest might be adequate in a flute part (at a moderate tempo), but in a bass part the same rest might not afford enough time to make the turn. And a 2-bar rest in a trumpet part, where they must also insert a mute, is a terrible page turn. Remember that the printing convention is odd-numbered pages are always on the right, so those are the pages that must have a good page turn. You can always insert a blank somewhere if you need to.

After you've made the big decisions about good page turn spots, look over the part for major sections. Try to make them start a new system. Is your piece in movements? Try to make those start a new page. Do any of them run "attacca"? Don't put a page turn at that spot then, unless they don't play at the start of the next movement.

8. Edit the parts

Now that you've done the big work, the next step is what typesetters call "walking the lines." You go through the part, on screen, and look at every line, every bar, step by step, and correct collisions and other problems.

9. Proofread the parts

I recommend printing out all the parts and checking them carefully. We look closely at problem spots, such as instruments that were "separated" (e.g. flutes 1 and 2 shared a staff in the score, but are 2 separate parts when extracted). Mistakes can happen when splitting them apart.

10. Correct the parts

The last step is to correct the parts and then print them for the players.

You might be wondering, "do I really have to do all of this work"? The automatic parts look o.k., and I'm sure the Chicago/New York/Idaho Symphony/Philharmonic/Tuba Octet can read them. I would urge you to make the effort to create parts that are clean and easy to read. Rehearsal time with the musicians is a scarce (and rapidly vanishing) resource. You don't want to squander it.

— BILL HOLAB
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Bill Holab is the owner of Bill Holab Music, a firm that provides essential services to composers and publishers. Some of the composers that are represented include: Mason Bates, Kenji Bunch, Richard Danielpour, Jake Heggie, Pierre Jalbert, Gabriel Kahane, Cindy McTee, Kevin Puts, Michael Torke, and others.

Bill Holab Music has provided high-quality music engraving, typesetting, and design to the industry for over 30 years. Besides preparing complex, detailed concert works, we have supervised Broadway shows, film scores, and jazz works including the first large-scale jazz work engraved with computer typography software, Charles Mingus's *Epitaph*.

Specializing in contemporary opera, we have prepared over 30 operas for performance and publication, including: Adamo *Lysistrata*, Glass *Appomattox*, Kepler, *The Sound of a Voice*, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Catan *Il Postino*, Gordon *The Grapes of Wrath*, Portman *The Little Prince*, Golijov *Ainadamar*, Heggie *Moby-Dick*, LaChiusa *Send*, Rodriguez *La Curandera*, and Bernstein *West Side Story*.

Holab has served as Director of Publications for G. Schirmer/Associated Music Publishers, Director of Production for Universal Edition, Editor for C.F. Peters Corporation, and Director of Publishing for Schott Music Corporation. He brings decades of experience as both an editor and autographer to the relatively new area of computer note setting.

As a consultant, Holab has worked with Sibelius, Ltd., MakeMusic Inc. (FINALE), San Andreas Press (SCORE) and wrote the technical documentation for SCORE. He is a composer and studied at the University of Michigan and the Juilliard School.

MUSIC PREPARATION GUIDELINES

The following guidelines pertain to book design for music publications. They are a good starting point for most pieces, but the specific details of a work and its instrumentation will dictate the choices one must make.

Orchestra Scores

11 x 17" or 11 x 14" (for smaller ensembles)

Staff size 4 mm. to 6 mm.

Margins: sides .75"; top/bottom .5"

First page of music should have a copyright notice centered on the bottom of the page

Front Matter:

Title page:

- Title
- Composer
- Lyricist (if applicable)
- Short instrumentation (e.g. "for Orchestra")
- Description (e.g. "(full score)")
- Name of publishing company (centered on the bottom).

Notes page:

- Full instrumentation (for orchestra works) including doublings and percussion instruments
- Duration
- Commissioning credit
- First performance

Piano/vocal Scores

9 x 12", 7 mm. staff

Margins: sides .75"; top/bottom .5"

Choral Scores

8.5 x 11", 5 mm. staff

Margins: .5" all around

Chamber Scores

9 x 12", 7 mm. staff

Margins: sides .75"; top/bottom .5"

Solo instrument(s) with piano, make the solo instrument staves 60% of the standard size (7 mm.)

Parts

9 x 12", 7 mm. staff

Margins: sides .75"; top/bottom .5"

The first page of each part must have the instrument name

All subsequent pages must have a small header at the top indicating the instrument name.

Please don't forget to do this—we have printing problems if you don't include this information.

All odd-numbered (righthand) pages must have page turns

If a part begins on page 2 (for page turns) please include a title page as page 1.

In some cases we do 11 x 14" parts when we have to accommodate music that has serious page turn problems.

In some cases we do foldouts, but only as a last resort.

Page Numbering

Odd-numbered pages on the right (recto)

Even-numbered pages on the left (verso)

There are never any exceptions to this rule.

In music, we do not count the front matter (pages before the music starts). The first page of music is page 1, and the rest of the book should continue sequentially. The convention is to put page numbers in the top "outside" corners; odd numbers on the right, even numbers on the left.

If you have a large number of pages in the front matter (e.g., more than 4-6 pp.), they are numbered with lower-case roman numerals, centered at the bottom of the page.

The first page number is never shown (e.g., page 1 or page i).

Typefaces

- Tempo indications (above the staff) are in a serif font like Times, bold, 11-12 pt.
- Tempo alterations (like *rit.* and *accele.*) are the same size, but italic
- Measure numbers should be stated at the start of every system, at the top, in italic. It is not necessary to number every bar, number every 5 or 10 bars, or to use rehearsal letters in addition to measure numbers
- Title, composer, lyricist. These are usually in a different font, usually a serif font, like Garamond, Goudy, or Caslon. Whichever font you use, that same font should be used for page numbers, header text at the top of pages, and for the front matter.
- Page numbers on large-format scores (11 x 14 or 11 x 17) should be 12 pt. so that they are visible when we print smaller study scores
- Text above the staff (Technique text) is roman, same font as tempo indications.
- Text below the staff (Expression text) is italic.

Staff Size
(7 mm. is standard, never smaller)

Page Header
(include title and instrument name)

Page Number
(Odd nos. on the right,
even nos. on the left)

Bar Numbers
(start of each system)

Act I—Viola

9

498

mp *f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 498 through 501. It begins with a whole rest in measure 498. Measures 499 and 500 contain eighth-note patterns. Measure 501 ends with a double bar line. Dynamics include *mp* and *f*.

502

Detailed description: This system contains measure 502, which is a single measure of music ending with a double bar line.

Escena 5

Entrance Cues
(Note there are no
slurs or articulation; whole
rests indicate the player
is resting and this is
a cue)

506 $\text{♩} = 80$

Ob. 1 *pizz.* *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 506 through 509. Measure 506 is a whole rest. Measure 507 is an entrance cue for the Oboe 1, marked *pizz.* and *p*. Measures 508 and 509 are whole rests. A rehearsal mark '5' is at the start and '10' is at the end.

525 Vn.

arco *p* *p* *mf* *pizz.* *mf*

div. *p* *p* *mf*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 525 through 536. It is divided into two staves. The upper staff is for Violin (Vn.) and the lower for Viola. Measures 525-536 show various articulations like *arco*, *pizz.* and dynamics like *p*, *mf*. Rehearsal marks '3' and '4' are present.

Divisi Passages
(Should be written out
on separate staves.
Indicate "unis." after
it returns to unison playing.)

537 unis.
(*pizz.*) al sord.

Tpt. 1 *mf*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 537 through 540. It is a divided passage for Trombone 1 (Tpt. 1). Measures 537-540 are marked *mf*. Rehearsal mark '4' is at the start and '5' is at the end.

Indicate to the player to
put on their mute (*al sord.*
means "to mute" in Italian)
"via sord." indicates to
remove the mute.

551 *Meno mosso*

con sord. *pp* *pp* *via sord.* *p* *senza sord.*

div. *pp* *pp* *3* *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 551 through 562. It is a divided passage. Measures 551-562 are marked *pp*. Rehearsal mark '3' is at the end. Performance instructions include *Meno mosso*, *con sord.*, *via sord.*, and *senza sord.*. A tempo marking $\text{♩} = 80$ is also present.

563

mf *p sub.* *mp* *p*

div. *mf* *p sub.* *mp* *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 563 through 577. It is a divided passage. Measures 563-577 show dynamics like *mf*, *p sub.*, *mp*, and *p*. Rehearsal mark '5' is at the start and '6' is at the end.

578

6

Detailed description: This system contains measure 578, which is a whole rest. A rehearsal mark '6' is at the end.

Page Size
(9 x 12" is good; some librarians prefer 10
x 13. Never larger than 11 x 14.
Do not do 8.5 x 11" parts!)

Odd numbered pages are
always on the right side and
must have good page turns.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

SELECTED READING

Teach Yourself The Art of Music Engraving & Processing by Ted Ross
CD-ROM \$24.95

npc Imaging - May 2001. ISBN 0-9706231-1-9
[Printed edition is currently out of print, but used copies can be located]

Music Notation by Gardner Read

Softcover, 482 pages, 2nd edition. Taplinger Publishing Co. - March 1995. ISBN: 0-8008-5453-5. \$19.95

Music Notation in the Twentieth Century, (A practical guidebook) by Kurt Stone

Hardback - 357 pages. W W Norton & Co. - 1980 \$45.95

Handbook of Instrumentation by Andrew Stiller

CD-ROM \$39.95

Printed Version \$64.00

Paperback - 533 pages, 2nd Edition. Kallisti Music Press - 1994. ISBN 0-9645431-0-9.
npc Imaging - November 2000. ISBN 0-9706231-0-0

The Technique of Orchestration and CD Recording by Kent Kennan and Donald Grantham

~\$75.00

Hardback - 401 pp., 6th Edition, Prentice-Hall 1990, ISBN 0-13-900366-5

Best source for these and other books on Music Notation: www.npcimaging.com

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.finalemusic.com [the official Finale site]

www.finaletips.nu [Finale tips]

www.tgtools.de [the most comprehensive plug-in package for Finale]

www.sibelius.com [the official Sibelius site]

www.musicprep.com/sibelius [useful extras for Sibelius]

www.scoremus.com [the official SCORE site]

<http://www.music-notation.info/en/compmus/musicnotation.html> [general music notation information]

MUSIC PRINTERS

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